

## Popcorn and Mrs. Pence Shape Indiana Office

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Sitting on the desk in Rep. Mike Pence's Longworth House Office Building space is a bright red mock rotary phone. The object sticks out as it sits beside a regular, run-of-the-mill office phone, and it is the most brightly colored object in the room. It only has one line, and only one person in the world has the phone number.

"Mrs. Pence is the only one who has the number, not anyone on the staff. She occasionally shares it with the kids, but when this phone rings, I answer it," the Indiana Republican says with a smile.

Former Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) recommended Pence get a separate family phone when he arrived in Congress in 2001.

"He said, 'After hours when the switchboard is off, you ought to put a separate line in the office.' This was before everybody was wearing BlackBerrys and cell phones and such," Pence said.

Pence's wife purchased the red phone and gave it to him as a Christmas gift during his first term. The couple had the phone installed with a line separate from the main switchboard, and to this day it is Pence's favorite part of his office. The phone is more necessary now that Pence is chairman of the Republican Conference, a job that keeps him busier than ever.

The phone isn't the only object in the office that can be traced back to Karen Pence. Her fingerprints are all over the Congressman's personal office. A watercolor that she painted of a

front porch in Indiana decorates one wall, while a photo she gave her husband after he was elected hangs beside it.

The photo is a view of D.C. taken from the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va. The famous bronze statue of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima is in the forefront, while the Washington and Lincoln memorials glow against the backdrop of a purple sky. The Capitol Dome glistens in the distance. The photo is accompanied by the Bible verse, "Be strong and courageous and do the work."

During his 1988 failed Congressional campaign, Pence read the book "Flags of Our Fathers" and found himself inspired by the bravery and patriotism of the Marines at Iwo Jima. When he first visited Washington during that campaign, he went straight to the memorial.

"I got off the airplane and I jumped in the cab. I told the cabbie, 'I want you to take me to the Iwo Jima memorial,'" he says. "I wanted to see these Americans."

The view from that hill in Arlington now holds a special place in Pence's heart as a reminder that there is more to serving in public office than just what happens in Washington.

"I always said you had to look past men like these to see this city," Pence says.

The verse that accompanies the photo is not the only trace of religion in Pence's office. He keeps a tattered Bible on his desk. The pages of the red book are wrinkled with age, and the spine is taped together. Pence purchased the Bible in 1986 when he was studying at the Indiana University School of Law in Bloomington. He tries to read the book every morning, and the text is peppered with his personal notations.

"Somebody once told me that a Bible worn out is a sign of a life that's not," Pence says. "It's been a great source of encouragement for me."

While Pence looks to the Bible for encouragement, he also takes inspiration from the concise family motto engraved in a gold plaque that sits on his desk: "No Flapping." The phrase comes from a conversation Pence and his wife had as they struggled to decide whether he should make a third run for Congress in 1999. Pence had already lost two elections, and the couple wasn't sure whether they were up for another campaign. While mulling over a run, they went horseback riding in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota.

"We were trying to make a decision as a family about whether to sell our house, move back home and make another run for Congress, and we saw these two red-tailed hawks coming up from the valley floor," Pence says. He adds that the birds weren't flapping their wings at all; instead, they were gliding through the air. As they watched the hawks, Pence's wife told him she was onboard with a third run.

"I said, 'If we do it, we need to do it like those hawks. We just need to spread our wings and let God lift us up where he wants to take us,'" Pence remembers. "And my wife looked at me and said, 'That'll be how we do it, no flapping.' So I keep that on my desk to remember every time my wings get sore, stop flapping."

While Pence has made his personal office into a place filled with "things that edify and encourage my sense of what's important," he has also tried to make the office a comfortable place for constituents to visit. To start, everyone who walks through the door is offered a bag of popcorn, the smell of which wafts into the building's hallway.

"I never get sick of popcorn," Pence says. "Whenever anybody comes into our office we offer them a bag of Indiana popcorn — fresh popped — something cold to drink, and we try to make them comfortable."

In the end, Pence says there are two values that are important to any Congressional office.

"No. 1 is to practice what you preach about legislation and vote the way you tell people you're going to vote," he says. "And the second is hospitality."